



# Tips for Ordering Takeout or Delivery

*Reviewed by Esther Ellis, MS, RDN, LDN*

*Published February 5, 2020*

*Reviewed March 2020*



*Iam Anupong/ iStock /Getty Images Plus*

When you need a night off from cooking and dine-in restaurants aren't an option, meal delivery services or takeout can be a convenient alternative. Making healthful choices from an online menu can be a challenge — especially since nutrition facts are not always posted to online menus.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind to help you decipher the meal delivery or take-out menu:

- Terms to be mindful of include “crunchy,” “crispy,” “battered” and “breaded,” as well as “creamy,” “cheesy” and “Alfredo,” which often can mean they’re higher in fat or calories. Limit items that are fried or served in sauces that are high in saturated fat. Items that may be more healthful options might use terms like “baked,” “grilled,” “roasted,” and “steamed,” as well as “al fresco” or “marinara.”
- Consider steamed vegetables or fruit as a side option, when available.
- Rethink your drink. Calories from sugar-sweetened beverages can add up quickly and provide little nutritional value. Choose options like water, low-fat or fat-free milk or drinks such as unsweetened coffee or tea.
- Sauces and dressings usually come on the side when ordered to-go but ask for sauces and dressing on the side to be sure and help control how much actually goes on your food.
- Instead of eating out of the containers, plate your food for a more appropriate portion size when servings are large. You also can save part of your meal for later.

As always, wash your hands before serving or eating.

### Ordering for Little Ones

Choose a restaurant that caters to children and has a nutritious children's menu that includes smaller portion sizes and meals designed to provide ample nourishment for smaller bodies.

Pasta is a kid favorite – penne, macaroni or shells are easiest for small children to handle. Ask for pasta with olive oil or marinara. Some kids are more adventurous than others but it's important to encourage tasting new foods. Choose two or three suitable menu items, then let your child pick one.

To prevent choking, cut grapes and other solid foods, such as meat, poultry, bread and veggies into tiny bites.

### Incorporate All Food Groups

**MyPlate** provides an easy tool for helping you include servings from each of the five food groups. Simply put, divide a plate into four sections when you eat:

- **Grains:** Fill one-quarter of your plate with grains. Choose whole grains when you can, such as brown rice, whole wheat pasta or whole grain bread.
- **Protein:** Make one-quarter of your plate a protein food, such as fish, chicken or a lean source of meat.
- **Fruits:** Fill another quarter of your plate with fruit such as blueberries, tangerine slices or strawberries.
- **Vegetables:** The last quarter is for vegetables such as spinach, broccoli or carrots.
- And, enjoy a serving of fat-free or low-fat **dairy**, like milk or yogurt, with every meal.

Nutrition needs vary from person to person, so choose the foods that fit your health needs, eating style and preferences.

Even though you aren't cooking together, try to still eat together as a family. Use the unexpected time at home as an opportunity to reconnect as a family and make family meals a regular routine. Involve your kids in setting the table and let them put takeout or delivery food on plates so they can feel like a part of the process.